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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IC](#) [AF](#) [LH](#) [DA](#) [HR](#) [UK](#) [CA](#) [NATO](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST ON ICELANDIC PEACEKEEPERS IN PRT
CHAGHCHARAN

REF: A. A) KABUL 5855 (NOTAL)

[¶](#)B. B) REYKJAVIK 431 (NOTAL)

[¶](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified, protect accordingly.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST

[¶](#)2. (SBU) Department requests that addressee embassies demarche host governments requesting that they urge Iceland to keep its mobile patrol team in PRT Chaghcharan beyond April 2007. Please report host government reaction by February 20. End summary and action request.

GOAL

[¶](#)3. (SBU) The USG's ultimate goal is to convince the Government of Iceland (GOI) to reverse its decision to withdraw its mobile patrol team of civilian peacekeepers from PRT Chaghcharan in April 2007. To that end, we seek to enlist the other countries whose forces make up PRT Chaghcharan (Lithuania, Croatia and Denmark) as well as Afghanistan, Canada and the UK in demarching Iceland. We would expect the three governments contributing forces to the PRT to be receptive to this idea, as PRT leaders are very concerned about losing the unique capabilities their Icelandic colleagues bring to their operations. Afghanistan has an obvious stake in the effectiveness of the PRT. Canada and the UK would also be useful and credible voices in the demarche, both because of their own major contributions in Afghanistan and because Iceland seeks increased defense and security cooperation with them (and with Denmark) in the wake of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iceland this year. Embassy Reykjavik has already informally raised this issue with the GOI. Following demarches by the PRT members and others, Department expects to ask Embassy Reykjavik to present a more formal demarche to reinforce the message.

BACKGROUND

[¶](#)4. (U) The GOI intends to withdraw the Icelandic mobile patrol team (Mobile Liaison Observation Team/MLOT) from Afghanistan at the end of April 2007 (Ref A). This decision reflects an effort by the GOI, which has no military, to steer its peacekeeping contributions away from activities

that are controversial with the Icelandic public, particularly from roles where Icelandic peacekeepers are armed or wear military-type uniforms (Ref B). Posts may draw from the following background information in requesting host governments to demarche the GOI:

--The Government of Iceland intends to withdraw its civilian peacekeeping personnel from the Lithuania-led PRT in Chaghcharan in April 2007. Iceland's contribution to the PRT currently consists of a Mobile Liaison Observation Team (MLOT) totaling 13 persons. The withdrawal of the Icelandic MLOT would be a serious loss for the PRT.

--Because of its make-up, special equipment, and experience driving in the kind of harsh terrain found in Ghor Province, the Icelandic team has been especially effective in conducting patrols. Moreover, through its reliability, efforts to pass on skills to other patrol units, and unique rescue capability, the Icelanders have made the PRT as a whole much more effective.

--The Icelandic MLOT is unique in the resources and skills it brings to its designated patrols in PRT Chaghcharan. A major problem for all the other patrols is lack of experience at driving in the harsh mountain conditions of Ghor Province. The Icelandic team is used to off-road driving up steep inclines and fording rivers - including at night. The Icelanders, and only the Icelanders, have truly all-weather vehicles (Nissan Patrols) and the appropriate tires for handling the extremely rough and mountainous terrain of often snow-bound Ghor province (there are no paved roads).

--The makeup of the Icelandic team of civilian specialists -- two counter-terrorism policemen, a search and rescue worker, skilled drivers, a paramedic, and a mechanic (who participates in the patrols) - has resulted in remarkable reliability for the team's missions, and particularly valuable and insightful reporting. Even if Iceland were to turn over its vehicles to other PRT elements at the end of April, it would waste much of the major investment Iceland has made in bringing the vehicles to Afghanistan because, without the corresponding special driving skills and ride-along mechanic, the vehicles would soon become as vulnerable to problems as the rest of the PRT's vehicle fleet.

--Beyond the value they add through their own patrols, the Icelanders contribute by making every effort to pass on to the other elements their special driving skills. Moreover, this winter the Icelanders have already had occasion to rescue other units' stranded vehicles, and they have been paired up with other units as a safeguard.

--We understand that the Icelandic Government's policy on peacekeeping, as stated by Foreign Minister Sverrisdottir October 19, is to take on purely civilian missions where Iceland has particular niche capabilities to contribute, while gradually increasing the number of peacekeepers deployed overseas at any one time. Although the Icelandic team's mission in PRT Chaghcharan involves real danger and close cooperation with military forces, it is still a civilian mission and a perfect example of an Icelandic niche capability. The team's rules of engagement do not allow it to participate in combat except in self-defense, its members are not part of the PRT's quick response force, and they do not perform guard duty.

--The core mission of PRT Chaghcharan is performing patrols, and the Icelandic MLOT does this uniquely well and makes an all-but-irreplaceable contribution to enabling the other elements to perform their roles effectively. The team's withdrawal just a couple of months from now would be a serious loss to the PRT. We urge you to join us in approaching the Government of Iceland, asking that it reconsider this decision.

RICE